

**In the Claims:**

1. (Canceled)
2. (Currently Amended) The probe needle according to claim 6 wherein the contact member tip comprises a first surface attached to the free end of the substantially liner elongated member.
3. (Previously Presented) The probe needle according to claim 6 wherein the entire surface of the contact tip is provided with the coating.
4. (Original) The probe needle according to claim 3 wherein the entire surface of the probe needle is provided with the coating.
5. (Canceled)
6. (Currently Amended) A probe needle for testing semiconductor chips, the probe needle comprising:  
a substantially linear elongated member including a fixed end that is fastened in a holding element;  
a contact tip attached at a free end of the substantially linear elongated member, wherein at least a portion of the surface of the contact tip is provided with a coating of a chemically inert, electrically conductive material that is hard relative to the material of surfaces of the semiconductor chips to be contacted, the coating comprising titanium nitride; and  
an adhesive layer of elemental titanium arranged beneath the titanium nitride layer so that the adhesive layer is between the surface of the contact tip and the titanium nitride layer and contacts both the surface of the contact tip and the titanium nitride layer.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 11 wherein the coating the probe needle at least in the area of the contact tip comprises completely coating the probe needle.

9.. (Canceled)

10. (Canceled)

11. (Currently Amended) A method for manufacturing a probe needle for testing semiconductor chips, the method comprising:

providing a probe needle that includes a contact tip;

coating at least in the area of the contact tip with a titanium layer;

coating the probe needle at least in the area of the contact tip with a chemically inert, electrically conductive material that is hard relative to the material of the contact surfaces of the semiconductor chips to be contacted, wherein the coating comprise coating with titanium nitride over the titanium layer; and

~~coating at least in the area of the contact tip with a titanium layer prior to the coating with titanium nitride, wherein the coating with titanium and titanium nitride takes place in situ to form a bilayer of Ti:TiN over the contact tip.~~

12. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 11 wherein the probe needle is coated with titanium using a physical vapor deposition (PVD) method.

13. (Original) The method according to claim 12 wherein the PVD method comprises a reactive magnetron sputtering method.

14. (Original) The method according to claim 12 wherein the coating takes place from a titanium target with the addition of the reactive gases, argon and nitrogen.

15. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 11 wherein the titanium nitride comprises titanium nitride with a stoichiometric ratio of Ti:N = 1.

16-17. (Canceled)

18. (Currently Amended) A method of forming a semiconductor device, the method comprising:

fabricating a semiconductor wafer to include a number of circuits and a number of pads;  
contacting a test probe to at least one of the pads, the test probe being attached to a probe card, the test probe including a substantially linear elongated member with a contact tip fastened to, the elongated member extending away from the probe card, the contact tip being coated with a layer of elemental titanium and a layer of titanium nitride overlying the layer of titanium, which form a Ti:TiN bilayer coating over the tip; and

performing an electrical test by applying a test signal to the semiconductor wafer through the test probe.

19. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 18 and further comprising, after performing an electrical test, packaging the semiconductor device.

20. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 18 wherein the step of contacting a test probe is performed on an individual semiconductor chip.

21. (Previously Presented) The probe needle according to claim 6 wherein the holding element comprises a probe card.
22. (Previously Presented) The probe needle according to claim 2 wherein the contact tip includes a body extending away from the elongated member, the body narrowing being widest at the surface and narrowing as it extends away from the elongated member.
23. (Previously Presented) The probe needle of claim 22 wherein the body of the contact tip narrows to a point.
24. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 18 wherein the elongated member includes a fixed end that is fastened to the probe card and a free end, the ~~contact~~ elongated member being attached to the free end of the probe card.
25. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 24 wherein the contact tip includes a body extending away from the elongated member, the body narrowing being widest at a surface that is attached to the elongated member and narrowing as it extends away from the elongated member.
26. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 25 wherein the body of the contact tip narrows to a point.